

John Taylor Gatto Quotes (Author of *Dumbing Us Down*) (page 2 of 3) [goodreads.com](#)

"Schools teach exactly what they are intended to teach and they do it well: how to be a good Egyptian and remain in your place in the pyramid."

— John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*

"Mass schooling damages children. We don't need any more of it. And under the guise that it is the same thing as education, it has been picking our pockets just as Socrates predicted it would thousands of years ago. One of the surest ways to recognize real education is by the fact that it doesn't cost very much, doesn't depend on expensive toys or gadgets. The experiences that produce it and the self-awareness that propels it are nearly free. It is hard to turn a dollar on education. But schooling is a wonderful hustle, getting sharper all the time."

— John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*

"Good students wait for a teacher to tell them what to do. This is the most important lesson of them all: we must wait for other people, better trained than ourselves, to make the meanings of our lives. The expert makes all the important choices; only I, the teacher, can determine what my kids must study, or rather, only the people who pay me can make those decisions, which I then enforce."

— John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*

"I've come to believe that genius is an exceedingly common human quality, probably natural to most of us. I didn't want to accept that notion — far from it: my own training in two elite universities taught me that intelligence and talent distributed themselves economically over a bell curve and that human destiny, because of those mathematical, seemingly irrefutable scientific facts, was as rigorously determined as John Calvin contended."

— John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*

"The lesson of bells is that no work is worth finishing, so why care too deeply about anything? Years of bells will condition all but the strongest to a world that no longer offer important work to do."

Bells destroy the past and future, rendering every interval the same as any other, as the abstraction of a map renders every living mountain and river the same, even though they are not. Bells inoculate each undertaking with significance."

— John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*

"... meaning where meaning is genuinely to be found — in families, in friends, in the passage of seasons, in nature, in simple ceremonies and rituals, in curiosity, generosity, compassion, and service to others, in a decent independence and privacy, in all the free and inexpensive things out of which real families, real friends, and real communities are built"

— John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*

"Is it any wonder that Socrates was outraged at the accusation he took money to teach? Even then, philosophers saw clearly the inevitable direction the professionalization of teaching would take, that of pre-empting the teaching function, which, in a healthy community, belongs to everyone."

— John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*

"The shocking possibility that dumb people don't exist in sufficient numbers to warrant the millions of careers devoted to tending them will seem incredible to you."

— John Taylor Gatto, *The Underground History of American Education: An Intimate Investigation Into the Prison of Modern Schooling*

"child labor becomes a label of condemnation in spite of its ancient function as the quickest, most reliable way to human independence—"

— John Taylor Gatto, *The Underground History of American Education: An Intimate Investigation Into the*

Prison of Modern Schooling

"In 1909 a factory inspector did an informal survey of 500 working children in 20 factories. She found that 412 of them would rather work in the terrible conditions of the factories than return to school.

In one experiment in Milwaukee, for example, 8,000 youth...were asked if they would return full-time to school if they were paid about the same wages as they earned at work; only 16 said they would."

— John Taylor Gatto, *The Underground History of American Education: An Intimate Investigation Into the Prison of Modern Schooling*

"Limiting the power of government, in order to liberate the individual, was the great American revolutionary insight. Too much cooperation, avoiding conflict from ordinary people, these things aren't acceptable in America although they may suit China, Indonesia, Britain, or Germany just fine. In America the absence of conflict is a sign of regression toward a global mean, hardly progress by our lights if you've seen much of the governance of the rest of the world where common people are crushed like annoying insects if they argue."

— John Taylor Gatto, *The Underground History of American Education: An Intimate Investigation Into the Prison of Modern Schooling*

"A large fraction of our total economy has grown up around providing service and counseling to inadequate people -- and inadequate people are the main product of government compulsion schools."

— John Taylor Gatto, *The Exhausted School: Bending The Bars Of Traditional Education*

"may occasionally pay lip-service to their value, but it ultimately has no real use for artists, dancers, poets, self-sufficient farmers, tree lovers, devoted followers of what it views as non-materialist cults — Christian or otherwise — handicraft workers, makers of their own beer, or, for that matter, stay-at-home moms and dads, all of whom, when they endure at all, do so at the margins and on the periphery of the social economy."

— John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*

"average men and women don't really exist except as a statistical conceit."

— John Taylor Gatto, *The Underground History of American Education: An Intimate Investigation Into the Prison of Modern Schooling*

"All global ambitions are based on a definition of productivity and the good life so alienated from common human reality that I am convinced it is wrong and that most people would agree with me if they could perceive an alternative. We might be able to see that if we regained a hold on a philosophy that locates meaning where meaning is genuinely to be found — in families, in friends, in the passage of seasons, in nature, in simple ceremonies and rituals, in curiosity, generosity, compassion, and service to others, in a decent independence and privacy, in all the free and inexpensive things out of which real families, real friends, and real communities are built — then we would be so self-sufficient we would not even need the material "sufficiency" which our global "experts" are so insistent we be concerned about."

— John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*

"Indeed, the lesson of bells is that no work is worth finishing, so why care too deeply about anything? Years of bells will condition all but the strongest to a world that can no longer offer important work to do. Bells are the secret logic of school time; their logic is inexorable. Bells destroy the past and future, rendering every interval the same as any other, as the abstraction of a map renders every living mountain and river the same, even though they are not. Bells inoculate each undertaking with indifference."

— John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*

"imitation of notable models as an effective spring of learning; was the most ancient and effective motivation to learn—to become like someone admirable—put to death deliberately by institutional pedagogy."

— John Taylor Gatto, *The Underground History of American Education: An Intimate Investigation Into the Prison of Modern Schooling*

"Free will allows infinite numbers of human stories to be written in which a personal you is the main character. The sciences, on the other hand, hard or soft, assume that purpose and free will are hogwash;

given enough data, everything will be seen as explainable, predetermined, and predictable.”

— John Taylor Gatto, *The Underground History of American Education: An Intimate Investigation Into the Prison of Modern Schooling*

“At the heart of the durability of mass schooling is a brilliantly designed power fragmentation system which distributes decision-making so widely among so many different warring interests that large-scale change is impossible to those without a codebook.”

— John Taylor Gatto, *The Underground History of American Education: An Intimate Investigation Into the Prison of Modern Schooling*

“When children are stripped of a primary experience base as confinement schooling must do to justify its existence, the natural sequence of learning is destroyed, a sequence which puts experience first.”

— John Taylor Gatto, *The Underground History of American Education: An Intimate Investigation Into the Prison of Modern Schooling*

“That seemed crazy on the face of it, but slowly I began to realize that the bells and the confinement, the crazy sequences, the age-segregation, the lack of privacy, the constant surveillance, and all the rest of the national curriculum of schooling were designed exactly as if someone had set out to prevent children from learning how to think and act, to coax them into addiction and dependent behavior.”

— John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*

“Think of the things killing us as a nation: narcotic drugs, brainless competition, dishonesty, greed, recreational sex, the pornography of violence, gambling, alcohol, and the worst pornography of all -- lives devoted to buying things, accumulation as a philosophy -- all of these are addictions of dependent personalities. That is what our brand of schooling must inevitably produce.”

— John Taylor Gatto

“Few institutions are considered so universally to have failed as our schools, yet in spite of this dreary record a prescription of increased dosage is making its way to the national agenda. The specifics of this proposal: a) Schools should be open year-round, avoiding long summer holidays for children. b) Schools should extend from 9 to 5, not dismissing students in mid-afternoon as is currently the case. c) Schools should provide recreation, evening meals, and a variety of family services so that working-class parents will be free of the "burden" of their own children. The bottom line of these proposals is reduction of the damaging effects of "freedom" and "family" on a subject population.”

— John Taylor Gatto, *The Exhausted School: Bending The Bars Of Traditional Education*

“Regimentation, methodization, systematization, standardization, organization, coordination, disciplined arrangements, conformity -- these things are at the very heart of our national state policies, and are the poison that has killed our families and left individual survivors in a numbed, angry, nearly hysterical condition.”

— John Taylor Gatto, *The Exhausted School: Bending The Bars Of Traditional Education*

“How many schoolteachers were aware of what they actually were a part of? Surely a number close to zero. In schoolteaching, as in hamburger-flipping, the paycheck is the decisive ingredient. No insult is meant, at bottom this is what realpolitik means. We all have to eat.”

— John Taylor Gatto, *Weapons of Mass Instruction: A Schoolteacher's Journey Through the Dark World of Compulsory Schooling*

“Why, then, are we locking kids up in an involuntary network with strangers for twelve years?”

— John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*

“the lesson of bells is that no work is worth finishing, so why care too deeply about anything?”

— John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*

“We don't need state-certified teachers to make education happen — certification probably guarantees it won't.”

— John Taylor Gatto, *Weapons of Mass Instruction: A Schoolteacher's Journey Through the Dark World of Compulsory Schooling*

“education and schooling are, as we all have experienced, mutually exclusive terms.”

- John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*
- “School is a twelve-year jail sentence where bad habits are the only curriculum truly learned.”
- John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*